

# Bard

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# Bard

DAWN

but call  
me middle  
of some night

I wait with her  
like an aria  
in an opera I don't know,  
the elevator  
rose and rose  
who knew  
a house could be so tall  
and have so many tenant souls?

Baltic light, Austrian music  
up and up  
then we were there.  
But who were we to begin with?

The iterations  
of fulfilment  
lead to doubt.

Identity is betrayed, not revealed,  
by desire.

The church bell  
the pigeons' upsweep,  
the whole city  
lost inside me

I thought.  
And then the marshes ran  
down to the sea again,  
wave form, trigonometry  
folded on itself,  
paradise in your arms,  
believe.

1 April 2020

= = = = =

**Dare I say what wants to answer?**

**The sturgeon in the creek mouth  
mounding brief out of sea?  
Or a seal in Saugerties?**

**We are given  
so much to remember,  
we're like a sky full of itself  
so that we too cover the whole earth.**

**I said that to Olson  
that skeptical enthusiast  
in a dream, he nodded  
with my head,  
what can I do but know what I know?  
Know what you don't know  
he said.**

2.

So much for dreams  
especially on April Fool's  
or St Stupid they call it  
in San Francisco  
where they stand naked in the window  
to be seen as they see,, who?

and they went down  
to the deepest Sunset  
to challenge the sea.

But then the rents go up,  
the music changes.

3.

I wanted to be there now,  
not necessarily Pacific,  
any person of the sea will do,

**but mostly wish it could be  
where Canapitsit channel  
meets the open Sound.**

**S**

**There is a little sailboat there  
that has nothing to do with me  
but I call home.**

**1 April 2020**

= = = = =

*Non son Lindoro*

I thought I had  
already written  
a poem

with that title,

*I am not*

*the name on my disguise*

my name is someone else

you think you know

vague, glorious or dull,

but other, other

and you've heard it

somewhere

maybe

I whispered it myself

into your tipsy ear

confident you'd soon forget

as I have

so many times

wondered who I am again.

2 April 2020

= = = = =

I wonder what the pilgrim  
holds in her hand—  
she's bringing it  
back from the shirne,  
a flower, a letter?  
Something light enough  
to flutter in her fingers.  
She doesn't watch it,  
it trembles as she goes.

2 April 2020



= = = = =

Sensing cloud  
she looks up.  
The half-moon  
powerful,  
                unchanged.  
But cloud  
was on the way,  
she felt the vague of it,  
music-like,  
Debussy at midnight,  
say,  
        what the night  
tells itself  
to help it sleep.

2 April 2020

= = = = =

Still like March,  
40's and a cold wind  
shivering bare branches.  
But a car rolls  
gently up the road,  
slow, slow, a sign,  
slow things change,  
I shiver at my desk.

2 April 2020

= = = = =

Remorse is relative—  
does it mean  
the bit comes again  
or the bite is strong?  
Latin *re-* works both ways.  
Let's hope the latter,  
not repeated before but did it all over again.

2 April 2020

= = = = =

**Sometimes the strong wind.  
Then I put on  
my wooden jacket  
my slippers  
made of spearmint leaves  
and walk outside  
pretending to be a part of what's going on.**

**2 April 2020**

== = = = = = = =

**Solve for three unknowns**

**room reign roam  
sound  
parries difference  
to same,  
I stand in the rain,  
old.**

**Rheum,  
in this year  
of whose reign  
do we go  
here,**

**we go to Rome  
by staying home?**

**2.**

**Thought was meaning  
to be found.**

**Who?**

**Always  
the parliament of you.  
Don't listen to me,  
hear me instead.**

**3 April 2020**

= = = = =

When there is only  
one color in the world  
who is it?

When you're young  
you skip.

Each step was a sweet  
denial of our condition,  
earthbound, ground people,  
*humanus* from humus,  
where we are.

Color  
is the light skipping  
with us, for us,  
listen to the light.  
And when only one color  
stands out of the dim,  
this dark house we live in,

**who is it, what are they saying,  
they who sing together  
to make color?**

**Does the sky  
have rods and cones too?  
Now I'm being frivolous,  
just skipping along.**

**3 April 2020**



= = = = =

**In my other body  
I walk along the sky  
looking for work—**

**people to help,  
deserts to water,  
empty spaces  
to fill with language,  
that riper music of the heart.**

**3 April 2020**

= = = = =

If I had listened to you  
I would be a bird now  
and see things  
where they are  
as they really are  
stressed out over  
continent and river,  
I look down at the water  
I see myself looking up

if I had listen to you  
I would be a River too  
if I had listened at all  
I would be there in an hour  
Be there.now  
there are only  
my words can reach.

3 April 2020

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF IT

In the seclusion of necessity  
a slender tree  
rises,

    pale fruit barely edible,  
not very nutritious  
but eat enough of it  
and it will satisfy.

2.  
Because being here,  
right here,  
is always coming from afar.

3.  
The pale taste  
of distance  
clings to it,  
but the leaves are clear,  
slim, musical even  
as they shiver in the wind.

4.

Even when the sun  
is not shining  
this tree  
reminds you of the sun.  
Its crown reminds you  
to throw out your chest and breathe—  
the tree reminds you  
that you, like it,  
are made of air.

5.

And like air  
you always come from somewhere else.  
Sometimes the clouds  
drift apart, the sky  
shows color and the sun walks by.  
See? *Here* follows you  
wherever you go.

4 April 2020

= = = = =

If you want to know  
what someone knows  
become them  
for a while.

                    Your mind  
will fill with theirs,  
you will know  
what it's like  
to walk on their earth  
thinking their own thoughts.

4 April 2020

**MALORY**

*from/for Tamas*

                  a book  
and its cover  
painted,  
                  **MALORY**  
                  **WORKS**  
lime green  
on a napkin  
folded, the folds  
sensuous and noble,  
a book in a basket,  
the Grail in its basin  
the word brought home.

**4 April 2020**

= = = = =

Back from bathroom  
salutes the dawn.  
The day.  
Already behind  
his schedule,  
struggles along  
after his obligations  
like a thurifer  
at High Mass after the priest,  
wafting incense  
of anxiety,  
perfume of must.

5 April 2020

= = = = =

**Yellow apparency  
in the far distance  
end of the road,  
my glasses downstairs,  
could it be spring  
after all, forsythia,  
my whole life?**

**5 April 2020**



=====

**What Nature knows  
we sometimes share.  
It's what we mean  
when we say Oh it's  
at the nack of my mind.**

**5 April 2020**

q= = = = =

The lifeline lingers—  
so much to happen  
in one week,  
let it pass over us,  
let it pass  
so we *can* again.

5 April 2020

## **PALM SUNDAY**

**It begins again  
death of a God  
who does not die,  
doesn't die  
but the killing is real,  
the killing was us.**

**5 April 2020**

= = = = =

Spending it all  
on one idea  
is how the mountain  
happened, happened to you,  
coaxing your thigh muscles  
up the geometry,  
a bird laughs at you  
over and over, you would too  
if you were your own wife  
clambering all sweat-stink  
to nowhere.

Remember you're still  
in the body. Skin  
remembers, muscles remember,  
your hind parts, like God's  
in *Exodus*, recount  
everywhere you ever sat,  
the stones of Venice, etc.  
The slope goes up,  
you call it thinking,  
this breathless lunge  
nowhere in particular but up,

up, as if the air up there  
were better for you  
than our own. It isn't  
Thin air doesn't give matter  
to the lungs, philosophy  
typically has trouble  
breathing. Touch me,  
I'll drag you down,  
swim in language with me,  
the ecstatic horizontals of the river,  
beautiful smug certainty of the sea.  
Are you still listening?  
Stop thinking. Understand instead.

5 April 2020

## **PALM SUNDAY SERMON**

**Greet him as he comes through the gate,  
greet him with palm fronds, cries  
in several languages.**

**The thought  
torments me—maybe he didn't  
have to die. No bumbling Romans,  
no jealous priests, no crowd  
turned inside out, no crucifix.  
ould it have worked another way,  
we greeted him, the Jews caught on  
that he was who they waited for,  
the Romans were at least polite  
the way governments usually are.  
And he would have lived, o blood,  
no crown of thorns, no sepulcher.  
Just a man in a land at peace, telling  
all humans what they need to know,  
slowly growing out from Jerusalem  
the wisdom of incarnate Deity  
making us what we are supposed to be.**

**5 April 2020**

## NUVOLETTA

on her back  
soft above the trees  
she dreams the sun up,

she drifts,  
the soft form  
is pure thinking

far below  
the trees hear her well  
and thrust leaves out

to show they understand.

6 April 2020

## [TWOVOICES I HEARD

\*

*(sGrol.ma)*

I am  
where nothing is lost.

\*

*(rDo,rje.Phag.mo)*

Be me  
and learn.

6.IV.20



**= = = = =**

**I don't know the first thing  
about governing a country.  
Yet here I am in charge  
of running the whole world.  
Fore an honest man, there  
is no end to responsibility.**

**6 April 2020**

## how to read under water

1.

Try the secret gospel  
of coral

how to be  
in one place  
and still be.  
Be. Fully.  
The glad  
understanding  
(how a fish knows)  
with no forgetting.

2.

A word  
in the water  
turns into fire.  
Wash it loose by hearing.  
all the elements  
turn air in you.  
you earth.

3.  
Seahorses stir  
in their corral,  
the moon is waiting.

A kiss  
is the other side  
of almost everything.

4.  
Outstretched  
on the primal  
the smell of rock  
beneath you  
worries you  
when you try  
so hard to dream,

dream of glaciers,  
opera houses,  
canals full of golden barges,  
gondolas slipping in and out  
between, clever as elvers.  
But some slight touch

gently moving  
is bothering your skin  
as if a lover.  
But only as if.

5.  
All these years  
I have told you too much  
but never enough.

The truth is not far.

6.  
We tend to be  
part of the same world.  
Or is it pretend.  
We know something, at least,  
know there are gods  
who want us,  
know there is consciousness  
in every living thing.  
In every thing.

7.  
So back to the ocean.  
with us,  
Cuttyhunk or Margate strand,  
drenched bathing suit  
sand twixt toes.  
The waves keep talking,  
they're as bad as I am,  
never stop. But they  
always make sense—  
for instance, right now  
you are the sense they make.

6 April 2020, Kingston

= = = = =

**My temple  
is the smallest  
piece of land,  
some trees on it,  
grass, a few  
yellow flowers  
nobody planted  
or you did,  
whoever you are.**

**6 April 2020  
Kingston**

= = = = =

It is the middle of now.  
The sides of the moment  
are much too far to reach.  
So I stay here, treading water  
on dry land, in the dark,  
writing one more testament  
that tastes like the sound  
of someone stroking skin  
gently and you answer.  
Hip or hand, hood or cloud,  
full moon. I can;t get out.  
It is now all over again,  
Moses and Pharaoh,  
angry families, cost of love.

2.

Call it the Bible and be done--  
one travels all one's life  
to turn the age, and there they are,  
words again, river of meaning  
running through the silt of sense.

3.

All this because one time  
you let me catch you praying  
to a tree, I guess, black maple,  
or some god beyond it, above  
it, inside it, or the air you both  
were breathing, leaf and lung,  
you let me know you prayed--  
and praying makes a different  
kind of now, still the far edges,  
but a prairie wind comes walking  
tells you of magpies, millions  
of years, warm coat for winter.

7 April 2020



= = = = =

I woke to wonder  
why I slept  
when the dark  
is so talkative  
and no one interrupts.

I woke to wonder  
if the words I heard  
in my head were  
mine or anyone's,  
did they taste of you  
when I tried to say them?

I woke to wonder  
to be precise  
to whom was I speaking  
silently in the dark.

**I woke to wonder  
how to catch hold  
of what it means  
to be here and now**

**and I thought  
that words could tell  
so I wrote them down  
*sleep is an afterthought*  
and *they woke you to wake them,*  
*they woke you to wonder.***

**7 April 2020**

= = = = =

1.

Just things  
I wanted to tell you,  
what else  
would wake me?  
Only the need  
to tell  
and it be to you.

2.

Just things you made me think  
or think I was thinking  
when I was just remembering you.

3.

You are always  
in front of me—  
do you know that?

**You do it by nature  
alone, not by the weak  
dithering we call intention.**

**You do it by being  
and by being  
gladly I follow.**

**7 April 2020**

## HERE BEGINNETH

1.

The silent cantos  
start today,  
sung words  
that have to harp themselves  
inside.

K. 299

and a mother dying,  
who  
is that, meaning  
on the flute?

The sound  
alive inside.  
Sleep till noon  
and call it a great city,  
Paris in river mist,  
the glorious pedestrians.

2

You always know  
the right time to tell me things,  
play me the music of a Scotsman

reciting Ezra Pound.  
from the later work, finally  
reaching towards love,  
love, not amor or amore,  
just love, as in your voice,  
and the sound of that too  
tells me what's time to do.  
To tell again  
what I have never told.

8 April 2020

= = = = =

We Irish love paradox  
but some of me is English  
so I look with suspicion  
on such enthusiasm. Yes,  
a song can be silent.  
but don't make such a fuss  
about it, let your heart listen  
as mine did on the Devon shore. Before...  
And then endless emigration,  
I carry on,  
                                  exploring  
the endless woods and rivers  
of right here.

8 April 2020

**= = = = =**

**Posture expresses mood.  
Mood bends spines,  
    sags bones.  
Music helps,  
    Liszt Ferenc,  
dance around the room,  
call it rhapsody  
what your body sings.**

**8 April 2020**



= = = = =

She's out there now  
taking pictures of an animal  
smallish, chubby, fur.  
The photo will show  
how dear they are, how near  
to us, so hard to know.  
Woodchuck. The first time  
she saw one, she thought  
it was a mongoose, a beast  
she knew from India stole  
a hair band from her once.  
But this plump motherly lump  
in our backyard does not steal.  
Hides under the deck, garage,  
thinks she's hidden when her head  
alone is out of sight. Me,  
I'm like that too, all I think I am  
is what I think. And my wise wife  
knows everywhere we hide.

9 April 2020

## **MANDATUM**

**Treat everyone  
the same,  
treat them all  
as if they were God,  
as if you loved them,  
and they loved you  
whether they know  
how to show it or not,  
treat them all with mind  
and heart and treat  
even yourself the same way.**

**9 April 2020  
Maundy Thursday**

= = = = =

Sound says rain  
pounds on the roof,  
air thickens with it  
suddenly,  
                    the sea comes down.  
Then goes back to heaven.  
Clear. Clen silence.  
Thunder an hour later.

9 April 2020

= = = = =

**Swarm**

**says the sense.**

**the senses.**

**What do we mean.**

**Meaning is making.**

**Florence snowfall,  
the sculptor's snowman  
I cite Vasari.**

**Or why  
did Verdi make Fenton sing,  
does sense always  
need a tenor?  
The world need an aria?**

**The senses swarm  
in every answer  
(be careful,  
what is said  
endures)  
catch me as I fall.**

2.

Close to the mirror  
close to the wall  
in between  
what is seen,

close to the ivy  
close to the brick  
we were away  
an uncle tore down the vine.

no right to do that,  
it never grew back,  
I pressed the brick,  
trusted the color of it,

the rough on my hand,  
they told me what it was,  
a rock that people make,  
bake, a stone of our own.

3.

But always  
the mirror is waiting.  
Looking at my face  
I want to dance,  
don't know why,  
never could, but still  
there is a quietness  
in those eyes that needs  
some glorious agitation.  
But when I look away  
even brick is dancing too.

4.

Handlebar musttache  
on the old locust tree—  
lichen they call it  
but I know better.  
That kind of tree  
ks a man at arms, knows  
the duties of the road,  
the bark no lovers dare  
no cuddle up against.  
Teach me my duty, tree.

5.

**I take lessons from everybody.  
The real school is free and never  
shuts its doors, the drone of wisdom  
goes on and on, *Pesach, Triduum*,  
Fourth of July, when you learn enough  
you understand the Sun herself,  
divine teacher of indoor astronomy.**

**9 April 2020**

= = = = =

Omen

    delivery  
out on windowpane  
or crow in far sky,  
quick of meaning,  
feel of cloth.  
The napkins  
no one uses.

2.  
Brief blue  
a band of sky—  
all the rest  
is radical,  
for once let  
the truth tell  
itself not smirched  
by our fears.



3.

And of course the child  
thinks rain on the windowpane  
is the sky crying,  
long face and sad Latin  
the child long ago dreaded  
to know why  
they call this Friday Good.  
Everyone knows that,  
everyone says the same answer.  
The window will dry  
but never the why.

4.

He hates it that it comes  
to that, a simple rhyme  
anyone can hear,  
in the wood's whisper,  
in the sea's snarl.

5.

I am allowed to be ignorant  
of the occasion. Flag  
on the stern of a freighter  
I don't recognize.

I am even permitted to be wrong—  
the tulip is the tallest  
tree I see, no sunshine on it,  
it's beginning to begin,  
the leaf, no leaf, I am permitted  
to put forth  
my answers.

The heart is the holiest heretic.

6.

Cold round the knees  
the scribbling monk  
pauses. A word  
he can't make out  
in the original. Gets up,  
dances around the room  
to get his body moving,  
his mind warm,  
Why is it always cold?

Why are languages  
anyhow, why not just one,  
like the sun?  
Back at the desk,  
he gives himself  
over to guesses,  
translates the brightness  
of an eye  
and prays for peace.

7.

How close we are  
to being right.  
I saw the bird into the sky,  
and later it flew back.  
Art of the fugue,  
we are two voices always  
or even more,  
trying to catch up with the words  
that try to catch up with what you think,  
all of you in the sky,  
same sky? Maybe,  
all of you trying to come home.

10 April 2020

= = = =

Remember the night  
it wasn't very late  
when you led me  
almost dragged me  
down to a grotto  
damp with time,  
red mud the floors of it,  
porous stone all round,  
faint glisten of the little  
light we had or made.  
We had been ambling  
in the hills, slowly.  
not meaning to get  
anywhere, just following  
the spider web of starlight  
treed all round us.  
The shock of it woke me—  
I knew such places existed  
but had never met one here,  
on such an ordinary night.  
My hand trembled as you led on.  
It is easy to go down into the earth—

didn't my teachers tell me that  
in school in Latin, in my ears  
when I still knew how to listen?  
You know how deaf my heart is  
so you took me by the hand  
and brought me there yourself,  
sword clatter on the stone, some  
sparrows were still chittering  
out there, out here I mean  
where there is no hand, no stone,  
no cavern for me to comfort in.

10 April 2020

= = = = =

Some words  
knew me in the night  
now stilled  
by sun.

lost words  
like an old song.

11 April 2020

=====

**Everybody is still alive—  
that is the answer.**

**\***

**All by itself  
alone on the shelf.**

**11 April 2020**

## SONGS AFTER HIBERNATION

It didn't want me to see it  
so I said it,  
I touched it instead  
with the sound of its own language  
left a little pale mark  
of the skin of its time.

\*

Later, a ladder  
to clamber  
up to somebody's window  
mouth full of song.

\*

Why can't I trust sunlight,  
dearest, nearest  
of all far off things?  
I have no hankering  
to be a rebel.  
things as they are  
suit me just fine, if only.



\*

Books we know the titles of  
but never read, they  
read us in our sleep,  
we wake embodied by  
the *Sentences* say of Peter Lombard  
or *The Heart of Midlothian*,  
the revenge of the unread.

\*

Now what can you do,  
bumble through the streets  
trying to find your way  
back to the hotel turns  
out to be your own home—  
words taste funny in your mouth.

\*

Girl in the tower  
forsythia in bloom  
just like always  
all over again.

11 April 2020

## **BDAY BK 4 BC**

**From the forest  
where cars grow on trees  
barefoot she came  
wearing a dress  
made exclusively of leaves,  
autumn russet and veral lime  
sweeping together,  
rustling as she came  
forward, towards rising sun,  
coming to be known.**

**2.  
And many knew her,  
listened to her voice  
and watched the sly sleek  
slim transitions in her thought  
her body showed,  
shimmered with  
and she was glad,  
yearned to be known,**

**Why not?**

**she thought  
since all we really are  
is an idea in God's mind.  
They had told her about God  
and she was eager to believe,  
know Him, or Her, couldn't tell  
from down here,  
so she, intricately simple,  
sashayed amongst us  
eager to be known.  
Know me, she stood  
once at the window,  
of a house she played in,  
know me, she cried.**

**11 April 2020**

= = = = =

The word he thought  
as green was give.  
The stone was the sky.  
Color shifted in his hands—  
his hands were someone else.

That is what it means  
to be between.  
He had taught himself to read  
for moments like this.  
where moss ends  
and grass begins,  
who that is standing in the trees  
and where the water comes from  
that soaks so many leaves.

Did you overhear the answer.  
the deer said  
or did you guess it  
from the shafts of sunlight  
stabbinb through mist?  
Do you have to read everything?

**But there is no believing,  
there is only being..  
He said the word out loud  
he picked up the sky and said  
we live now only in what fell.**

**12 April 2020**

= = = =

That was another man  
that was another day,  
the clouds had gone away  
he sang, but their shadow  
still sweltered on the lawn,  
praise me, he sang, if only  
because I am here, because  
I can ask for things, a child  
who can't drive, can't  
walk far, can't count past two,  
but can ask and ask all day long  
until the birds get tired of him  
and go home. Praise me  
because I am almost done.  
And then he was quiet  
and the darkness shouted his name.

12 April 2020

*Humani nihil a me alienum puto*

## THE WORLD'S FIRST LUNE

*By Terence the African:*

Humani nihil  
a me a-  
lienum puto.

12.IV.20

= = = =

Ruth's forsythia  
grows ever brighter  
deep in the long driveway  
yellow sheer  
in leafless trees.

12.IV.20



## THE READER

He was good at reading leaves. Not tea leaves-  
-those oriental mysteries had no charm for  
him. He liked reading ordinary leaves, one leaf  
at a time, locust or linden, maple or oak. *Our  
own trees!* he cried once when asked what  
kinds of trees the leaves came from he liked to  
read. He never said what 'our' or 'own' really  
meant, but we could guess,

he never went far away from where he lived, so  
we knew it meant larch and linden, oak and  
elm.

One at a time he would read them, slowly,  
sometimes only one leaf would take him a

whole afternoon. He read the veins and the chambers between them, lines and enclosures, slow-twist of length-lines, ancient tomb-work of the gaps between, so many signs, so many things to read.

Autumn is a feast of reading. Just as children then go back to school and the flimsy scraps of paper they have to spend their sweet time studying, he in the same weeks would be in a heaven of decipherment.

But what do leaves say, we'd ask him, what are you reading when you read?

He held up a brown wrinkled maple leaf, last year's, and waved it gently in front of us.

This leaf is a page from a diary, it tells about a fox cub practicing its pouncing beneath the

tree, and about a strange truck that rattled by on the highway, the leaf guessed it was a war thing, an army vehicle from the color it spilled.

He held up another leaf, a maple again, but very different, more wrinkled, older. And this, he said, ah, this, this is a page of what we would call philosophy I guess, though I don't really know what that means. This leaf is wondering about all the different ways of being in the world. It writes about how wonderful but scary it must be to move around, like the animals and birds around it, and wonders too what it's like to be the tree itself, stiff and unmoving. Then the leaf rejoices in its own nature, always in one place on the branch of

the tree, but always fluttering and moving about in the wind and the light, the tree is rejoicing, it has the best of both worlds. You know, he said, thanks to its leaves, a tree is halfway to being a bird.

I asked him once if he could teach me the grammar of the leaves, how to read them as he does. He looked at me as if I were crazy, or maybe just stupid. Just pick it up and start to read, he said. It's all right there, just hold it, gently, gently, in your hand, let your eyes play in its weaving, listen gently inside your mind, and let the leaf do all the rest.

Easter 2020

## BC BDAY BK 2

She married a man  
married him twice,  
they lived in a house  
that she kept very nice

But her real life  
was in the woods,  
playing hide-and-seek  
with butterflies and shadows

dancing with the trees,  
sonetimes even being one,  
being deep inside a single tree  
a maybe maple by the stream,  
hiding safe in its matter  
licking its sap, deep, deep,

and then leap out, run wild,  
chanting ancient spells

to moss and lichen, twig and bark,  
rubbing against the tree's skin  
to know what outside feels like,  
she wanted her whole life  
to be the mastery of in and out

and sometimes when the forest  
went away for a while  
or she felt lazy  
and the trees were far,  
she'd make do with the flowers  
in her garden, her secret boyfriends  
flagrant in colors for all to see,  
she'd sing love songs to each of them,  
all her silly flowers, daffodils  
(she'd call them asphodels)  
and hollyhocks, roses. tulips,  
even a lesbian iris now and then,

sweet songs, the neighbors  
heard her singing, some of them  
wrote down the words  
they thought they heard her singing.

how right they were  
because words are always right,  
aren't you?

But when the jealous indoor angel  
poured snow around outside  
to freeze her toes, she'd stay  
huddled by the fire and beat  
the angel at his own game,  
write quiet poems to each flame,  
short-lived flowers each of them,  
but flowers still and worth  
a song or two.

...

12 April 2020

= = = = =

**Something waiting in this pen  
a word to say  
a sparrow  
come back to our seed—**

**I listen with my fingers  
for what it means  
to say**

**needs no effort  
to decipher or decide,  
just let it speak,  
here, like an apostle,  
authentic, bringing  
you the truth.**

**13 April 2020**



= = = = =

What did she do  
when the music stopped?  
She married him  
yet again.

Birds  
do it, she thought,  
why not me?

Side by side,  
sing as a tree  
with thee  
she sang—

rhyme was easy,  
felt good,  
sleek as Vaseline.

She tried again:  
open, O great  
cave mouth!

And all the bats flew out.  
Settled swinging  
from the young trees by the creek.

So finally she went in alone  
plucking on a little  
gold harp she'd found  
drifting through the air,  
*feuilles d'automne* she thought  
and played louder.

Till the cave shuddered with her song.

The man was waiting,  
old enough to be her father  
young enough to scare her,  
so she sang softer.

He put out his hands,  
both of them,  
and ran them gently down her  
and lo! he was only water,  
what you'd expect to find  
running slow  
down the ctystals of a cave.

13 April 2020

## LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW

gasped, saw the moon outside,  
full, through curtain's gauze,  
filmy, flimsy,  
the lucent globe  
shone right through.  
He fell to his knees  
to pray,  
but he knew no words,  
no prayers.  
So let my body pray,  
he thought,  
and stayed there,  
kneeling, still  
as he could be,  
a long time  
before his prayer was done.  
By then the moon was gone  
but its night still  
lived in the cloth.

13 April 2020

## DINNER WITH FRIENDS

The beef's  
carved on,  
we hear the knife  
almost as it decides  
slice after slice,  
the kitchen  
spotless.

Excuse me,  
am I soup or salad?

My bread is cold,  
my window dark,  
the napkin on my lap  
is full of blood,  
no, that can't be right,  
it's only shadow,  
;ithe little shadows.  
Or is shadow the blood of light?

Wipe your chin  
and pretend to begin.  
It's not real food,  
it's family fare,  
*real food eats alone*  
*when you're in the dark,*  
this is just dinner.

She smiled at us  
seated round the *tish*,  
gives us a sign  
that all is well,  
even a sinner like me  
can nibble a plant.  
No wine for me,  
I live alone.

13 April 2020

= = = = =

Wading, ducks  
through the spaces  
time leaves  
in its tracks,

we  
sometimes swim.

*Alternatives to the obvious*  
we seek,

That is the book we read,  
the beach where we swim,  
Marilyn's ukulele  
in the dread of night.  
Ducks, I say,  
adorable, vulnerable,  
soon fly away.

14 April 2020

=====

**If you don't know  
what it means  
you're better off  
with mystery.**

**14 April 2020**



= = = = =

Grace of encomium  
you never knew the messenger  
who brought such glad ,  
the light was fading,  
the wind came up—  
these are the faces  
of a single cube:  
the die you cast.

14 April 2020

## WINDOW

Look out there—  
it wants you.  
It has no phone  
to call you  
but it still keeps calling.  
Light changes,  
wind walks,  
even the eternal birds.  
Look out—  
what are you going to do?  
Is there an answer in you?

14 April 2020

= = = = =

**What the shadow said—  
only the other  
is luminous.  
Learn from the other,  
live by its light.**

**14 April 2020**

= = = = =

Carrying the treasure back,  
conquistador of the moment,  
that motion in your brain  
you breathe as words, inside,  
no one there but you  
to say them, you recognize  
the voice but it's not yours—  
puzzle, forget it, you've got  
your treasure, your thought,  
now you can come home.

14 April 2020

= = = =

**Tree  
with a faucet in it  
high up  
to get the sap,  
not syrup,  
not maple,  
pure atmosphere  
pours from it—  
this  
is the world tree  
and beneath it  
safe in its  
immaculate shadow  
(a shadow made  
entirely of light!)  
a woman sits,  
her back  
against the bark,  
reading this book.**

**14 April 2020**

## WOODCHUCK

Child of the lawn  
the marmot races,  
his shelter is everywhere,  
enemies few—  
hawk overhead or fox  
or farmer,  
not many of him these days.  
She slows down,  
browses. Only the sun overhead.

15 April 2020

= = = = =

**Run back into the parlor.  
Peel the linoleum off the floor  
read what it says.**

**This is the world's new era,  
you can't so easily understand  
what's going on across the street,**

**the world is your windowsill,  
you still know the feel of it,  
bird song, evening star.**

**15 April 2020**

**= = = =**

**He has too many anythings  
and not enough nothing,  
if you don't have nothing  
there's not much you can do.  
Because nothing is where it happens:  
a new thought, a new love,  
a new way of walking your path,  
a new crazy bird in a brand-new tree.  
Nothing is the space we need to live.  
So what should he do,  
this anythingist, to learn  
the beauty of emptiness again?  
Read on. Keep reading the paper,  
carefully, after the words run out.**

**15 April 2020**



**GOT UP EARLY**

to hear a great teacher talk  
but got the date wrong--  
so my today  
turned out to be yesterday  
so this is tomorrow  
already, like a glass of wine.  
But I don't drink wine  
so there's a problem here,  
no morning glories blooming,  
lone vulture circling overhead  
then floating off. Problems  
everywhere. Why did I think?  
And think it was today,  
the thing that happened yesterday?  
Wrong is always easy, I console,  
I change the subject, I call it  
*yestreen*, Coleridge's word,  
I use it as often as I can get away with,  
lovely sound, sad soft lovely sense,  
a lap you lay your head on once,  
only a few dark hours ago.

15 April 2020

= = = = =

As if it turned away  
but still looked back.  
There is always something  
left to care about.  
a moment or a mountain.  
a friend waiting on the cock.  
Come, s;eep in my shade.

15 April 2020

= = = = =

The snow of seven  
is gone at ten.  
Blue sky,  
change of scene.

This long opera  
goes on and on,  
the sun herself  
is humming in the wings.

16 April 2020

= = = = =

**Residue of chance  
is all we are  
he thought, then thought  
again and knelt down,  
praying to the hand  
that holds the imaginary dice.**

**16 April 2020**

= = = = =

Solemn as a cloud  
perched over a tulip tree  
starting to leaf.

*Liriodendron tulipifera*

memory serves up,  
but doesn't know the cloud's name.

16 April 2020

= = = = =

Things can be small  
and still b e tall.  
Language says so  
and language can't lie,  
at least not all the way,  
always some truth  
at the bottom of a word,  
tilt it, let it trickle  
to your dry lips, o God  
how thirsty we are.

16 April 2020

= = = = =

**That forsythia  
still glows golden  
through the brown-grey  
scribble of bare branches  
as if spring had stopped  
in its tracks. A little snow  
this morning, gone now,  
some hope. Weave fine weather!**

**16 April 2020**

= = = = =

In the back of the barn  
we all are born—  
science says we come later  
but I wonder,  
                    weren't  
all the animals people once  
who gave up on language,  
our hands,  
                    to have wings?  
Fangs? Symmetries?  
I see that sometimes in their eyes,  
the wistful sense of us  
as what they once were,  
back when we all still were angels.

17 April 2020



**= = = = =**

**Our culture idling at the crossroads  
waiting for the light to change.**

**17 April 2020**

= = = = =

O distance, you delicate absence,  
human will on the wheel,,  
sun soon,. each cloud  
a message from your friends  
but who can read them?  
Here in the waiting room of Heaven  
anxious we eye every door  
and even the bright windows  
get a p[ayer or two.

17 April 2020

= = = = =

**Here I am  
the tree is outside I  
am waiting  
eager for the leaves  
to manifest,  
I want them to be  
bold as Lenin in 1917  
I want them to flee  
the safe Switzerland  
of the dark and come  
out, here to join me  
in the dangerous  
liberty of the light**

**17 April 2020  
[spoken]**

= = = = =

The light is fading  
The street lights have come  
and I am waiting  
But what I'm waiting for  
is not so clear  
I think it's you—  
what else could it be but you  
you who are everything .

17 April 2020

= = = = =

Serene semblance  
what we need  
to begin  
I seem  
to use that tree a lot  
to stand there,  
stand for something  
no one can say.

2.  
So it's out there, always,  
never inside.  
Except the real inside,  
deep, deep,  
the furthest anyone can ever go.

3.

A tree told me this  
after all.

You can't be truer than a tree.

*I am where you left me yesterday*

it sang, *who else*

*of all your friends could tell you that?*

4.

At least we mostly know

what's in our hands,

if it's big enough to see or feel.

Stone or bread, the hand

is the First Decider,

the music hangs in the air a while

but the hand holds on.

5.

Once there was a woman  
with her arms around a tree  
you saw this in mind's eye, you knew  
*embracing* means to hold in your arms,  
holding on, you saw her  
and at last you understood  
something about standing still.

18 April 2020

= = = = =

Half the people I know  
used to play the cello  
then gave it up.  
It must be something about me.

18 April 2020



= = = = =

Now that I;m here  
 tell me what to do.  
 I have the feeling that  
 everybody--birds  
 and leaves and stones--  
 have their tasks in hand  
 but what about me?  
 I kept waking up supposing  
 I had overslept, but not.  
 Even now I should be sleeping.

2.  
 Observe the dangers of sunlight:  
 you imagine everything has started already.  
 But all the stages are empty,  
 the singers still learning their parts--  
 oh those French vowels, those high D's--  
 Time for me to get in line.  
 But where does it begin?

3.

Why do I imagine that my plaint  
holds your interest? I guess  
you have such wakings too.  
wondering what the whole business is  
and what you're doing here.  
Where else can I be? I reason  
but then an answer comes.  
from some poet, *Anywhere  
out of this world*. If you can  
call that an answer, a flight  
with no destination, rich smells  
from the kitchen but before me  
a plate with not a trace of food.

4.

All this mythology makes me tired.  
Bird and food and spring leaves--  
pure fantasy inherited from Greeks.  
Nothing here but us, and what we make up,  
plus whoever put us here to do their work.  
Good morning, it's time to begin.

19 April 2020

= = = = =

the caution of midnight  
is a cat walking through ferns  
back there, where the sun  
never shines anyhow  
and there is no cat. That  
is just the feel of it, songs  
like *A Missing Animal* or  
*Who will you be*  
*when the light comes on?*  
That sort of music.  
Imaginary pop, don't ask me,  
I don't know that stuff,  
my ears are Mahler'd deep  
But I do know when  
an missing cat walks through  
ungrown leaves--I hear  
the rtremolos of absence--  
can't you hear them too  
now I've told you where they are?

19 April 2020

= = = = =

**If everything that happens  
is a sign, we will get there  
soon. Follow the signs--  
that's easy enough if  
and only if you read them.  
I was going to tell you  
here is one now, but then  
all of a sudden it went away.**

**19 April 2020**

= = = = =

**Three-part invention.  
The theme  
falls away,  
the spaces take over—  
you call it silence  
but I call it  
what the music meant.**

**19 April 2020**

== == == == ==

**I can't explain everything—  
or can I?  
Is that what you're waiting for  
with your beautiful eyes?**

**19 April 2020**

=====

**Say something  
a rose can't say.  
Silence. What about  
theology— does a rose  
have something to tell us?  
Yes. A rose is.**

**19 April 2020**

= = = = =

She gave me blue roses  
easy enough to do in dream  
but I was grateful anyhow,  
a gift is a gift no matter  
\*though it is the German word  
for poison, why? It's given.)  
As I was saying, blue roses.  
I gave her an amber sweater,  
not just the color but the stuff  
itself, smooth, cool, ancient,  
electric. Somehow soft enough  
for her to put on. The roses  
were hard though, carved  
out of lapis, scented with lavender,  
fields we walked through once  
by the old Roman road to Spain.

19 April 2020



## LA VIE DU POETE

Now listen to me  
babbling of directions,  
textures, destinations  
when I never left home,  
listen to me chant  
of magic fountains,  
blue-tiled, temples,  
herds of caribou, me,  
who spins an old faucet  
and drinks from the tap,  
listen to me rave about  
mermaids and conquistadors,  
zeppelin trips and forest nymphs,  
*moi*, who sometimes dares  
to step outside and sit on the porch.

20 April 2020

= = = = =

**Imagine the opposite.**

**Go there.**

**Lid off, reach in,  
lift it to your lips  
and taste.**

**Then come back and tell  
just from the taste  
alone what kind  
of love they make  
in such a place,**

**and how the birds sound  
clamoring in  
whatever they use for trees  
there, there  
the desperate place**

**we so much need to know.**

**20 April 2020**

## AME IT TAME IT

Animal volition  
some single word  
to shape it,

name it tame it—  
call by what it is  
the anxious creature  
in the heart

the heart itself  
patiently recording  
each fear, each  
gasp of anxiety  
pulse by pulse,

o the atrial animal,  
calm it, call it  
terror, unease, whatever,  
but give a name to it  
and sleep  
almost in peace.

20 April 2020

= = = = =

The jointed wooden pelican  
flaps its wings when you pull the string.  
You do all the work,  
it flies a few moments  
then relaxes in the permanent  
midair it depends on,  
yet another string. This \_\_\_\_  
somehow reminds me of me —  
O love tug my string one more time.

20 April 2020

= = = = =

**He sent some birds  
up to pick holes  
in the Sky that's  
how rain happens  
always in the clouds  
and the rain comes down  
after a while the empty  
clouds fall away so  
no choice but the sun  
comes out. It iis plain now  
that everything is controlled  
by the birds – you hear  
their cries of satisfaction  
when the sun comes to them again.**

**21 April 2020**

## CHANGELINGS

**Remember how the fairies uysed to sneak into a new born;s room and switch babies, putting one of their own in place of the normal human child--a hild that wd be taken away and raised as a fairy, leaving the changeling (as they called them) to grow up among us and charm us, shame us, teach us, punish us--whatever fairies do best.**

**Well, they still do. Switch babies, I mean. Just like the old days. The only difference is that we dont believe in fairies, so have no explanation for the sudden apparition in an ordinary**

family of a genius or a wizard or a violinist, a Mendelssohn or Rilke.

We study tables of ancestors. gaze breathlessly at DNA fractions, think privately of demons or secret adulteries, we get nowhere. The answer is what it's always been: fairies.

= = = = =

Today I am created equal  
he said, and a white car  
sped up the road, it  
was equal too, creation  
is a dicey, minute by minute thing,  
a woman singing all the while.  
Could this all be an opera?

21 April 2020



= = = = =

Again no color  
to the day,  
wire causeway,  
winter souvenirs  
hedge on the moon  
and live bird in it  
twists of light  
branching fence  
taste of wood  
skin of time  
cream on the ankles  
appeal to spirit  
all connexion lost  
the world repelled  
but magnets  
repel also  
that is the secret  
on the park bench  
play chess with stones  
when I had memory  
wrote a sonata

in the glove compartment  
father's Pontiac  
whose word was this  
what German character  
all the theaters closed  
we tell our own lies now  
softly at home  
at least the night  
not much  
grey day no rain.

21 April 2020

**D= = = = =**

**oes the word come back  
after it's been said and heard?  
Cherish the soft truth  
in each sound we make,  
birdsong or theorem.  
Wake up again. And again.**

**21 April 2020**

= = = = =

**Bless the instrument  
in every tool  
an ocean focused  
evolution happens  
instant in your hands**

**21 April 2020**

## LOVE SONG

I heard white-throated sparrows singing  
and that was enough for me,  
that and the sky—

did you hear it?  
But you never stop hearing the sky.

21 April 2020

**S= = = = =**

**ound of door opening—  
what more does friendship ask?  
Something more. A word  
left in the air, scent of hair,  
quiet cushion on the couch?  
Sound of the door closing.  
Or was it twilight?  
Close your eyes and turn around.**

**21 April 2020**

= = = = =

Rarity of the obvious  
no sun we see  
though we look up  
no chair at the table  
set out for friend—  
I see her lips  
pursing and relaxing  
on the fipple of the flute,  
but hear nothing.  
Somehow it is all like a tree  
but who knows why?

22 April 2020

= = = = =

The books I never read  
are reading me now,  
I become a character  
in a dozen plots  
leading into strange languages  
spoken on another shore,  
other mountains than  
these Blue ones that see me.  
If I had read all the books,  
I would be free. How can that be  
when all the books I *did* read  
lead me to this energetic place,  
jungle, castle, crowded street?

22 April 2020



= = = = =

How to be the one  
place wind won't come  
a hand laid on an open page  
is there writing on it  
or only in it?

They sit in their back yard  
waiting for more leaves [?] to speak,  
listening to the subway train below

but who would go there  
if they could?

Isn't thinking about a place  
any place, torment enough  
when here is the only hap ?

22 April 2020

= = = = =

To say an honor  
to hear a grace.  
Clouds shirred over birdsong,  
animal policies serving well.  
Alert. Stumble awake.  
Be the little man who wasn't there.  
Be the color on the grass.  
Now stop. The material  
is singing loud enough.

23 April 2020

**SCRIABIN: SONATA *No.*2**  
**PLAYED BY ROBIN FREUND\_EPSTEIN**

**It wonders in me  
how the wound comes home,  
something *says*  
and then the word rolls back**

**wave  
from no sea**

**do you love me?  
it says and says  
again**

**until you hear  
the wine trickling  
into the green glass  
your mother told you  
came from the sea**

**do you love me yet?**

**the banked clouds over the lighthouse**

remember,  
the ferl of surf on yiur dry toes,  
remember

are you listening?  
are you loving me yet?

What can that be  
on the horizon  
when I am snug indoors  
playing with cards,  
Renaissance *tarocchi*  
full og storms and naked beasts

some of them like you,  
do you wonder  
why you wound me?

do you ever regret?

and then I'm sorry I mnade you sorry,  
I hold my peace  
and watch the window  
always the window

**always the rain**

**the rain pretending  
to wash us clean**

**out of breath almost with watching**

**there is a current carries even us  
my heart looks up like something in church  
and sees you again**

**and this time  
you are looking at me ay last  
aren't you?**

**\***

**but why do I trouble you with all this strife,  
this love that looks like longing  
this longing that looks like an army  
bedraggled soldiers coming over the hill  
trying to march fast  
but faltering, my thought falters**

as I try to hold you  
in mind, heart, anywhere,  
barren hillside nowhere near the sea,

you tell me, you are the reason  
for all this striving, this broken war,  
this tumble down the hill and suddenly  
all the soldiers are children again,  
just kids on a grass slope  
tumbling, sliding, gravity  
is their mother, she loves them  
do you love me yet  
do you, do you,

why can't you tell me?  
why can't I tell from just the way  
the sky looked this morning,  
the way the white-  
throated sparrow sang?

23 April 2020

*[Text composed as I listened to the recording for the first time. I began writing when the music began and stopped writing as the music ended. So this a first hearing, first listening-through, what I heard Scriabin saying]*

## THE GLEAM OF GLISTEN

drive a truck through Kansas  
why don't you remember  
isn't dawn animal enough?  
Casual, leaning on a maple tree  
you watch the myriad  
can't it be me?

Am I  
the only one to be only?  
Kansas again, a cushion  
below your heels, gradual  
erosion of the peneplane

somebody's birthday every day  
give a kid a drone for Xmas  
all a child ever wants to see  
is whatever isn't there,  
it takes a lot of growing up  
to take an interest in being here,  
landscape of the moment,

or was it a birch tree I meant,  
the white one, you write on its bark,  
childhood has its advantages  
try to remember them  
it;s only time gets in your way  
the necrology of feelings  
scribbled in a thousand sonnets

why did I get up so early  
was I trying to catch rhe snow at work  
before it sneaked away  
or took the El back to 1950  
girl on the platform bla bla bla  
a poster of it to show how it should be  
a wall is to lean on like a tree  
or was it a lamp post in London  
an outcrop hear Laramie?

You've got to lean on something  
it;s like carrying your bed with you  
being under the covers as you go  
dreaming on your feet  
like a batter waiting for the pitch



flexing muscles you don't have  
dreaming images you can't see  
but still,

but still,  
do it while you can, some  
other lad will take up the thread  
the tale, or lass, or let me  
know how I can help  
I used to know how.

2.

So that's what the pre-dawn glisten  
of streetlights said on the wet road  
I think I was the only one awake  
to hear it, but you never know—  
the woods are full of listeners  
what else is a tree for  
they bear witness  
tell all that they have heard  
since they planted us on earth  
but we're seldom smart enough to heed them  
and for God's sake how do you heed a tree?  
that's what they should teach in schools,  
they teach us to listen

but to the wrong characters,  
they should instruct us instead  
on how to hear trees and listen to stones  
then Bach would come back in all of us,  
most of what i know  
comes from hearing the church walls talk  
when the hymns finally stop talking,  
just sat in the light and listened.

3.  
So why do I talk so much  
my kind wife wonders  
at breakfast especially  
that long-awaited brunch  
when the sun if any is high,  
I talk and what I keep saying is listen  
Listen to the glisten I say  
and she looks at me quietly  
and wonders why I  
of all people can't hear what I'm saying.  
But saying wants to be said,  
o fearsome judge, saying  
is what the stone does

and can't I be shale a while  
like the rock ledge in the back yard,  
can't I listen by speaking,  
that's what I'm trying to say  
now go back to your lox and eggs  
and I'll try to be quiet  
at least for a while.

24 April 2020

## OUT OF NEW BEDFORD

Remember the sea-wall  
closed against storm  
the iron gates sliced shut  
locking us in the harbor,

now how island?  
Run up the shore  
round the bay, little boat  
ride through the spray.  
get there.

Got there.  
Years later I still feel  
a little bit pf guilt  
for eluding the sea-wall,  
built so long ago for me.

24 April 2020

= = = = =

**Richard Strauss and I  
lived together fourteen years  
in a place called Earth,  
I hear his horn concerto  
now in my head, the one  
he must have written  
thinking of his father Franz.  
Thinking about people  
makes things happen.  
Then I lived four years with  
Prokofiev till Stalin died.  
Who should I think about now,  
whose music changes the world?**

**24 April 2020**

= = = = =

**Walking the headache home  
and sprawling it on the recliner  
closed eyes see what happens next,  
best, the geometry of darkness  
arcs its mysteries around, loose,  
loose, let the tension go, ha,  
easier said than gone, but slip  
into the dark, a lovely loose-  
limbed silence is waiting for you.**

**24 April 2020**

= = = = =

Was it here when I looked?  
No. But was I here when it  
waited? Who can tell.  
*How far I am from this place*  
I sang, knowing no better.  
And the trees heard me,  
cast down their shadows  
even in moonlight to spell  
what they thought of  
the arrogance of my ignorance.  
Weighed down by paradoxes  
I stumble towards knowing  
something at least that will  
bathe me with humility.

24 April 2020

= = = = =

This reasonable earth  
where one person wakes  
from one dream into another  
before the final waking,  
this personable earth  
that holds your hands  
tenderly while you're sleeping,  
then the wonder of waking,  
these simple deeds that do us  
and we don't have to do,  
pronoun after pronoun, this  
empty house full of people?

2.

It was twice waking  
that started this--  
what is that country in between,  
a dreamy Alsace neither here nor there  
and yet I had to talk my way across it



to get into what still looks like  
an ordinary day?

She had dark hair, matters  
to discuss, problems of the heart  
or maybe mind, not money,  
not real estate, just the anxiety  
of her eyes--I knew her once.

And how wearily the jogger  
jogs this way in his yellow jersey,  
no, wait, that's how, he's  
on this side of the dream.

25 April 2020

= = = = =

Full of [the] normal confusions  
the adding-machine of the hours  
looks old-fashioned as a wooden fence—  
and who keeps all hours in?  
Indoors is the real outdoors,  
the unchained wilderness within.  
He paused, he thought  
but thought goes nowhere,  
never gets out. As if the Sun  
were always asking Is it noon yet?

25 April 2020

= = = = =

**Keep asking for answers  
someone may be listening.  
Be rational after all,  
a fox is just an animal  
isn't it? Not a guide  
to ghostland? How  
can we be sure? Every  
animal at every encounter  
is a specific instruction,  
nothing is random, even  
when it has bright red hair.**

**25 April 2020**

= = = = =

Imagine a hand.  
Where does it go?  
What does it know?  
Very soon it will be now  
but not yet. You still  
have time to imagine it.  
Speak gently to it when it comes—  
it may be only the first of them,  
all of them *thinking* in the dark.

25 April 2020

= = = = =

Afterimage of a tree—  
it must be something in me,  
something the mind does  
with what it knows,  
neurons and remembrances,  
the special pulse of morning.  
Sunlight. A row  
of wine-glass elms,  
Massachusetts on the mind.

25 April 2020

**KTL**

*kai ta loipa*

*And the left*  
out, all the rest  
of the list,

the leapers and the lepers,  
the levers that lift us  
or let us fall,

*les lèvres*  
whispering syllables,  
to find the sayables,  
the lesser limits  
in what we say in our hearts  
to one another but dare  
not lift the latch of lips  
and say out loud,

the lame.,  
the limp, the listing keel,  
to tell all the yous in this world  
how much you care,

lip on her popo,  
river on the leash,  
let me. ley ,me  
the way I list

for that us lust.

The lepers nod in their caverns,  
waiting with confidence  
for the healing kiss,

lend me an ear too,  
*kai ta loipa*,  
how the Greeks said et cetera,  
and all the rest,

I am leaning in now,  
leaning on you,  
licit or less, a lease  
on your lips.  
lower or leaner,

loping onward  
as if to be legal,

unlikely!

Let him live it along,  
the lissome rivers  
rival his longings,

on, on, to the she-sea  
he means,  
a branch of the lime-tree  
held in his hand,  
Coleridge in the shade,  
er live for letters,

send me the truth,  
let me lick it like an envelope  
and seal it in my longing  
do my logic will intuit  
which way I should lean

I lay that before the lady,  
,  
a line is the lingering lesson,  
a lift-up-your-hearts  
like a drone from a lectern



relive every word of it!  
Linden the boulevard  
where it began me,  
young lime-trees on each lane  
away away to the ordinary sea!

You listened closely  
loosely to what I lifted,  
turn the line into linen,  
made a dress of it  
a sheath a skirt a kilt  
kirtle *kai ta loipa*

the whole world clad in what you meant.

25 April 2020

= = = = =

Nothing is where  
it remembers itself to be,  
always on the other side  
of the river from itself  
and has no bridge but me or you.

25 April 2020

= = = = =

**How ro cope with it:  
s[eak a foreign language to it,  
Serbian, Albanian, any one  
you don't have a clue to yourself,  
that way it will know you're harmless,  
just a lady with a parasol, if that,  
or some man with a crushed straw hat.**

**25 April 2020**

= = = = =

But what do we do with what is left,  
shuddering sense of breathless escape  
all that's left of the dream  
I just woke from, not a single  
image left, no narrative,  
word, sound, not even a color  
left, nothing to hold onto  
but the fact of its being gone?  
I wake with a new suspicion:  
I am all that's left of a dream,  
a shared of that shattered vessel,  
or all I am is what's left over.  
the mere *et cetera* of someone else's list.

Dream is still the undiscovered country,  
we still don't *know*.  
All our theories serve some other science,  
some other faith.  
But what is really happening  
when we dream,

**and how is it happening  
and is there anybody there  
who makes it happen  
or to whom it happens on its way to us?  
I have been asking this for years  
his is as loud as I can shout the question.  
And who do I expect to answer?**

**26 April 2020**

**= = = =**

**Once there was a fish  
it said its name  
and spelled it with its tail  
flicking the clear water**

**I sat on the park bench  
reading what it said,  
felt its silvery name  
swimming in my head,**

**hurried home to write it down.**

**26 April 2020**

= = = = =

**Spell your name backwards  
to see who you really are  
or what they wanted you to be  
who gave it to you.  
Study it a while, try it out  
in several languages maybe  
till it makes sense. But then  
walk slowly to the tree and turn around.**

**26 April 2020**

= = = =

Getting close  
to the grain of wood,  
intimate even,  
head down  
vace close  
to the table top  
or desk, eyes  
almost too close  
to focus right  
but still. but still  
here you are  
with it, so close  
caught up within  
its elongations,  
its alphabet of lines  
each different  
making one same self  
and letting you in.  
This is your story too.

26 April 2020



= = = = =

*In hollyhocks they also suffer,*  
he said in me so I would remember,  
remembering is more important  
than understanding, he said,

and left me with a sense of color,  
colors, sadness without sorrow,  
how can that be, all  
the flowers of being gone

and it is true I didn't understand,  
don't understand, barely remember,  
but remember, variation  
is whee the music comes in  
comes from, talk about flowers!

27 April 2020

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1.

Can't look at anything  
without remembering  
who gave it to me.

Things, whatever else they are,  
are messengers, love letters,  
dictionaries of times past,  
caresses, reproaches.

2.

That is why a tree  
is not a thing.

A tree tells its own  
story, not mine.

That's why I listen.

3.

So story comes to us  
from two sides: self's and other's.

**You or I are where they intersect,  
ah, the logic of the psyche  
is woven from two strands.  
That's why we have two hands.**

**27 April 2020**

## PERFORMANCE

1.

Golden steps  
hips on a journey  
the circle is in us,  
inside us, every  
footstep a pilgrimage.

2.

Per/form  
must mean  
*through form*  
into reality, take  
the inside of you  
out for a ride,  
dance. walk the park,  
parade the street.



**Listen to it!  
It tells most of the story  
we need to know,  
philosophers, great  
battles of history,  
symphonies, science.  
All the rest is waiting  
for us in her next breath.  
Be close when she breathes out.**

**27 April 2020**

= = = = =

**What I thought it meant  
was something else:  
*Pay attention, as much  
of it as you have,  
what you'll see  
is worth the price—  
it really doesn't ,matter who  
you think you're pting it to.***

**27 April 2020**

## **A RAMBLE IN CONNECTICUT**

**Walk out of the sea at last.**

**Blow a tarnished silver horn in your mother's garden.**

**Sometimes it is wise to open the door.**

**Open the door and just stand there sleepily alert. Not waiting!**

**The trees have been whispering their secrets all winter long with their alphabet of branches, now fall silent, blushing with leaves in green embarrassment.**

**The ice is almost all melted now. And all the gouges and scratches and skate scars on its surface have dissolved into the pond. Year after year! No wonder water is so wise.**



**But sometimes it's all right to wait--just make sure you're not waiting for someone, not even me (whoever I am).**

**No wonder we get tired after two-thirds of a day-- at every moment we are on a road that forks in front of us, every breath brings new choices. Haven't you ever wondered why we need so much sleep?**

**Any sentence that begins with "I" can't tell the whole story. But it tries.**

**Read the signs: blue sky, shapely small cloud over tall spruce. I think that's its name.**

**Sometimes you feel you're walking through a dreamy empty city like Berlin, not too many towers, lots of skies, wide streets, everything safely in another language.**

**They say that Connecticut is named for its river, its Indian name, that meant it flows both ways at once--estuarial, obviously, like the**

Hudson (whose Indian name had the same meaning). The river flowing south as the tide flows north. Nothing natural can ever finally make up its mind.

There's a hill I know up in New Lebanon where you can stand with one foot in New York and one in Connecticut. Face north and your left foot will be in a sort of Sufi monastery downhill. God knows what your right foot believes.

Everything happens at once. How could it be otherwise.

I never met my grandfathers, both were dead before I was born. My mother's father in the one photo I have of him looked a lot like Wallace Stevens. I never met him either, but he taught me most of what I know, though you'd never know it. But it's what I mean when I say Connecticut, speaking of what words mean.

**I think there is a temple on the other side of anything, a sacred spacious building where true god is served. To find god go, to the other side.**

**I love it that we have borders and frontiers, especially the kind between states, real frontiers you can cross freely, nobody noticing except something deep inside you that knows, that always knows.**

**It has connect in it, of course, and cut. Does it mean cut all connection, dwell in sublime isolation? Or should we be wise and ordinary (the ordinary is always wise) and read it in English: connect the cut, span the gap, heal the wound, make the skin of our lives whole again.**

**Stevens at the end wrote about rocks, the rocks of his place. We belong to the stones of our town, out glacial boulders turned up in our fields. How could we live so long if we weren't part stone?**

**Slim hips of Connecticut wading in the Sound,  
across from my own island. Grandfather  
owned a little chunk of it but I left home.**

**So when I say or I sing come out of the shallows  
to me do I have to have someone in mind?**

**Why can't we all just sing?**

**Heal me with your song--  
every woman a wizard, every man a sage. Just  
open your lips, let yur breath do all the rest.**

**28 April 2020**

## HAGIOGRAPHY

**Who is the patron saint of clouds?  
Who lifts them up, shapes them,  
sails them above us to charm or instruct?  
Who is the patron saint of air,  
atmosphere? Wind, empty  
blue sky over bare maple trees?  
Isn't there someone we can thank for all this,  
someone smiling deep inside the world?**

**28 April 2020**

= = = = =

**Should I write along your skin  
the formula for light  
in case some kght you need to touch it  
and fall back safe through the dark  
into the startled illumination of dream?**

**28 April 2020**

**= = = = =**

**Be a bird of it,  
accept what is given,  
forget all the rest.  
That's how you learn to fly.**

**28 April 2020**

## ON THE PAINTINGS OF TAMAS PANITZ

**If you turn an ordinary human house  
(say eyebrow Colonial or post-war ranch)  
and turn it neatly and swiftly inside out  
it becomes a three-dimensional model  
of its owner's brain. Fact. This includes  
the household animals, children, spouses,  
hidden places of the heart (but we know  
since French science told us that the heart  
is really a parking lot deep in the brain)**

**and this model becomes available  
to the painter's thickly laden brush, his wit  
sharp as a palette knife (and the other  
way round) (in fact all paintings are really  
in parentheses, glimpses of the world  
snatched from the visible to the deeply seen  
and kept for future reference, Louvres  
and such). What is in the mind this brain  
embodies or encloses or discloses?**



Here's where the painter's *patte*  
comes in, his 'paw' or touch, his special  
difference, his voice. His cats,  
cows, trees, stars, moons, goblin shadows,  
alphabet of fears, thick as night,  
colorful as a dumpster full of metaphors,  
and all framed round with gold of Orient.

But no women. There are no women  
in some men's mind, which is why they need  
so urgently to find them outside,  
in that world where the brain turns itself  
inside out again and stands on a street  
as a nice white house with children  
passing and now and then a girl comes by  
who turns out to be a woman at last.

28 April 2020

## THE FLOWER EATER

In that part of the world  
where it's summer most of the time  
my friend likes to eat flowers.  
One day she sent me a detailed  
spreadsheet of her appetite being satisfied  
from which I deduce the following scenario—  
blame me not her if I get it wrong. So:

at the foot of a hill she plucks a rose  
from a public bush—who could own it anyway,  
a tree. a living thing?) . The rose  
is yellow, or perhaps red. They do  
have roses in those parts, don't they?  
:et's call it a rose because I like them  
and can identify them at once, unlike  
most of the world's flowers where I have  
not much of a clue. A yellow rose it is.  
She starts uphill, slowly. Slowly, Decides  
to eat a petal of the flower at each step.  
She's like that, she decided things/ How  
many petals does a rose have? Enough  
to get hee to the top of the hill where

someone (maybe me? is waiting. let's hope  
for lots of petals and really big steps,  
we want her up here, we're waiting  
(no, probably not me, I'd be heading  
downhill to meet her halfway)  
Step, eat. But what does eating mean?  
She slips a petal between her lips  
and holds it in her mouth, flat on tongue,  
coolish on the roof of her mouth  
when she raises the tongue to think  
about what comes next. Not chew—  
not much chew in one petal. Wait,  
accumulate. She'll hold the petal,  
the petals, in her mouth until the end,  
the top, I mean, and then when her mouth  
is full of flower she'll begin to chew,  
chew, swallow. She'll have to swallow  
in order to speak to whomever it is  
synds waiting for her on the crest of the bill,  
maybe watching her anxiously  
as she climbs, maybe just looking oiy  
over the panorama of the distant city—  
roses always have a city in the distance.  
The big surprise is waiting for her:

at every step a petal. But at every petal  
stripped from its native flower  
some part of my friend's anxiety  
falls away, doubts disappear, gloom  
gleams with rainbow light instead.  
By halfway up she's as happy as a kid  
doing hopscotch with a mind on food.  
*Petal, petal, take my cares away*  
she begins to sing when she notices this,  
makes the tune up, or it makes her,  
we'll never really know whp music is.  
And now she's so close, her smile  
am little twisted with her cheeks stuffed  
with what had once been a rose.  
And now she's here, looks down  
at the stem and green sepals in her hand,  
no petals left, and drops the evidence.  
And suddenly she's naked, fully-clothed  
but nakeder than she's ever felt,  
the air know every pore of her, her mind  
has turned into the sky. Far, far  
away she can still taste the rose.

28 April 2020

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**Kiss your neighbor  
wear a kilt  
it's all coming back to me  
like an old friend's middle name**

**wave the window clear  
borrow the rabbi's car  
the priest's umbrella  
speak Turkish to your cat**

**but shout Italian at the moon,  
you know it;s time by now  
this puddle you wallow in**

**time for this and that  
and I mean her and him  
the opposite ensconced  
in armchairs by the fireplace**

now you remember  
the sound you make on cellar steps  
the smell of cabbage sudden  
when you open the old atlas

where have you been  
that you've forgotten so much,  
I have to work so hard  
to remind you of the obvious,

satin on your skin, mosquito  
buzzing by your ear, the song  
of breaking glass, where are you now  
that you can hear me so well

but I can't see you at all?  
Is it all my fault after all?  
let it all come back, the little diamond  
you thought a pebble in your shoe.

29 April 2020

= = = = =

Can it still be now  
after all this while?  
I woke up and it was now  
again, don't dare to wake  
my wife by lamplight  
so I can't grab a book  
and look it up. And what  
book would that be  
that answers such doubts  
anyhow? I;d better  
get to work and write it now.

29 April 2020

= = = = =

**A touch  
translated from the French  
a touch where the hand  
feels you completely,  
reverently fully deeply  
but you don't feel it  
at all--a touch you don't  
have to be bothered with feeling!  
A touch that the hand  
does all by itself,  
and when the book says 'hand'  
it means a thousand different things  
on earth or heaven,  
bone or brain, wave or weather,  
the braille of the spring wind  
reading your skin.  
A touch you don't even know is a touch  
a touch from from someone  
who doesn't know they're touching.**

**29 April 2020**



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**The book sobs  
when you close it  
on your way to sleep.**

**29 April 2020**

## PERCEPTION

There was a light walking through the trees. I watched it for a while, confident it would soon go out or be gone. But it went on. Whenever I looked out the window, or even the door, the light was still wandering around the woods across the road. What could it be after? What does a light want? As far as I could ever tell, a light needs nothing, is entire and complete in itself. Still, this light certainly seemed to be after something, it kept looking around--that's just how it seemed, poking here and there, doubling back, hurrying on. I locked the windows and bolted the door, just in case, and went to bed, sure at least that by daylight the

light would have blended (or melded, ad the uninformed say) into the general light. But when I got up, hours later, shamefully close to noon, bright day, sparrows singing on the deck, the light was still there, still moving. So I got dressed and crossed the road and went into the woods, and you're the first person I met here, please help me, hear my story, interpret me, help me find my way out of the woods, this light is burning my hands.

29 April 202

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**I can't be bothered with reality.  
There's too much real work to do.**

**29.IV.20**

*Some Things I Think About Dream[ing]***CITIES**

I was eighteen when I first went to Paris. I got there by a slow sea voyage on a ship filled with students and other riff-raff—ask me sometime about the sea, A very slow boat, ten days to cross, something like that. Glorious first sight of England (Scilly Isles, Isle of Wight) my ancestral shores. Then France and finally stepped ashore, bus to Paris. Paris. Now several weeks before all this, I had a very vivid dream of Paris—I was standing on one of the towers of Noire-Dame and calmly taking in the city. I mention this dream because when I actually got to Paris, I found myself to my surprise a couple of times giving other strangers directions to places in the city, based on what I had seen in and remembered from my dream. I mention it now because it's interesting that dreams can delineate actualities, but also because I dream of cities a lot==and they are never like any cities I have ever known in waking, walking reality. hey

are always huge, crowded, with highly detailed streets and avenues, temples, cathedrals, some of the details intricately carved or painted, utterly lifelike and utterly possible—but not known on earth. Grand the way New York or London can be grand, scruffy and old and rich. I walk around in these cities, and in the dream they seem ordinary enough, and I'm there on ordinary missions. Often the city is Manhattan, with subways and busses and traffic and stories—but all of them utterly different from the island as is. (I have a little essay about all this, *Hypnogeography*, as free sample pdf from McPherson & Co., publishers of my fiction – but is this fiction?) But when in the dream I want to or need to go home, it is always to Brooklyn, either my adolescent home in the Old Mill district, or my first grown-up apartment in Crown Heights—a place I left in 1961. And in the dreams I can never get back there. In waking life, that's the least place I'd want to wind up in the night—and my dreams usually feature the night.

## PEOPLE

As with cities, the people I dream are, almost exclusively, people I've never met in waking, people I don't know at all. In fact, and this strikes me as very odd,, I hardly ever dream of anyone I know. But I dream of lots of people, all distinct, fully developed characters, faces, bodies, clothing, voices, professions. Most of them are adults, none very old. In the dream narratives, I am who I usually am, just me, in a wholly different civilization just like ours but not ours. Tender encounters with women, interesting discussions with groups, friendly men. No hostilities, lots of conversation. Lots of travel, I drive a lot, but always in normal ways in normal places. The radical astonishment of my dream life is just how undreamy it is. The only unworldly thing tends to be architecture in cities, so detailed, I could be a Vermeer or a Saenredam by night, that, and the ease of conversation with people. Everybody talks, everybody listens.

**WORDS**

**And that's the big thing: I dream language. Seldom but sometimes a whole short poem, but more often (never enough!) a phrase or cluster of words will swoop around in my dream until I wake—often they'll get me out of bed to write them down, sometimes I fight my way back to sleep, repeating the words so I'll recall them at morning. As I usually do—and so the poem *du jour* begins. I doint mean that most of my poems begin with dreams—they don't, only a tiny number begin that way, but they all begin with a phrase or cluster of words that come to mind, usually when I'm just sitting there looking at the blank page or the pale window at dawn. I mean Language happens to me, and I try to go with it.**

**HIIGHGATE**

**When Freud left Vienna he settled in London, where he spent his last years in a nice house in the Highgate neighborhood, in the northern part of the city. Once when I was in London I happened to be in the neighborhood, and**



walked up the nice front garden path rto his front door, knocked on the glass. The man has been dead for forty years at that point, but you never can tell. I waited a bit, nobody answered, so I wandered back to the big park. I mention this because I have a great fondness for Freud, the kind you might have for an old uncle who's smart and busy and kind, but whose ideas or pilitics are far from yours. Every stick has two ends, they say. And that is true of dreams too. Freud, sympathetic, sensitive, alert to sex and spirit both, chose always to follow the end of the dream that pointed back into the life and needs and fears and lusts of his patients—as he should, because he was above all a doctor, a dictor of souls. It seems to me that what I do with dreams, if I do anything, is to point them in the other direction: to see what they reveal about the people and places and images they create so brilliantly. That Cathedral where Eleventh Avenue meets up with Broadway, . what does that say about the city, religion, stone, the sky it pierces with its handsome

tower? *What do things mean?* I describe myself as a believer in the *hylonoetic*: my word, the conviction that matter possesses consciousness. Things think. So dreams are like lessons, lectures, nightly quizzes in the science of hearkening to things. Trees talk—everybody knows that. Well, so does stone, asphalt, radiators in Upper West Side apartments, where people think they're thinking about money and art, but really are just overhearing what the steel is saying.

29 April 2020

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Set it down  
get it right  
first time round

writing wants  
to say this  
this is now

not again,  
all you mean  
all it says.

30 April 2020  
*dreamt as such*

=====

**She was wearing a new fur coat  
strangely striped: 2½ inch bands  
pale fur dark fur alternating  
running down to the ankles,  
I wondered what two animals  
the furs came from, wondered  
how much it cost, she said  
a thousand dollars which was  
she said cheap for what it was  
but I thought that was dear  
using a word we used to use  
when I was young to mean expensive  
but nobody uses that word anymore,  
nobody has a coat like that.**

**30 April 2020**

## THE DOUBT

They say we are bilateral—  
two eyes, two cheeks,  
two hands, two feet.  
It makes me wonder  
where or who might be  
the other half of me.

But then I think: one heart!  
One mouth! Maybe I'm just  
exactly who I think I am!  
But thinking is brain-work  
and brain they claim also  
is split in two, halves, they  
communicate with each other  
on phone lines made of me.

So now I don't know what  
to think. Or who is thinking.

30 April 2020

*(Thinking About the Sea)*

And if you did ask me about the sea, I would say a simple thing, like The sea is my mother. I would mean by that dozens of wise and foolish things, sentimental things, energetic even propulsive things, how the thought of the sea wakes me to thinking and writing, and the sound of the sea helps me sleep at night.

My mother was full Irish, and the stories of Selkies, Seal Women they told me are linked inextricably with my mother, her fondness for the beach or lakes or any water, but I don't recall her ever swimming, how even at the end of her life she would sit by the salt creek that came in from the sea (Oceanside, New

York) and feed the swans or just observe. And there was a black sealskin coat in the downstairs closet, she never wore it in my lifetime but it was always there, I would hide in the closet sometimes and wrap it round me, I loved the feel of the fur, sleek, slippery as a living seal, the seals I visited so often in the Prospect Park Zoo.

And where is the sea in all this, you may ask, s. True, seals have been spotted far up the Hudson lately, even at Saugerties lighthouse, a mile or two north of here, fifty miles or more beyond their usual range. Yes, if they're here the sea is coming back, Charlotte and I sometimes manage to get up to Catskill in good weather and sit on the little peninsula, some

call it Wanatanka, yhat stretches out along the shore where Catskill Creek joins the Hudson, and the water is wide, wider than anywhere else I know on the river, and I can look out and half-pretend it's the sea herself. And sometimes I can even feel that when I look down from the Rhinecliff bridge at the dark shores.

Sentimental, see, foolish, fooling myself that the ocean I grew up by (Gerritsen Beach, Marine Park, Sheepshead Bay, Old Mill, the wooden walkways through the salt marsh by tottering Kinderhoek on Jamaica Bay) was not a hundred and thirty miles away but right here. Here where I need it to be.



Sometimes, though, I think I brought the ocean with me, always so close to my thought, almost the first metaphor- for-anything that comes to mind. Broad as the, deep as the, bright as the, wise as the, ever-coming-close like the sea. All life on earth came out of the sea—what more can we say?

Yet I have to keep talking. Because the sea keeps coming to the shore. No matter how small the island or how wide the continent, when you stand on the shores of it the sea is always coming in, the waves always come to shore, sweeps out edges clean, washes out, tide in tide out, it always comes again. How can I not think of it as mother of us all?

And then there is Cuttyhunk, my other island. Charlotte spent all her summers there, and when we married let me come too, so for almost thirty years I've been a summer pilgrim in a cottage on top of a hill, within sound of the sea by night. By daytime we hear people and birds, many of the latter, few of the former. And no streetlights on the island, so night is for hearing the exact speech of the sea and reading the sky. But sometimes distant neighbors leave their porch lights on, and the lighthouse on Gayhead, a dozen miles across Vineyard Sound, scratches out a word or two the stars are spelling. And sometimes the sea roars, and the wind is her comrade, and they make it so that even my dull ears can make out

the message of the moment. The fact is (sorry to be so slow getting to it) the sea is always talking.

I have written so much on Cuttyhunk! I write every day all year long., but in that month or two each summer, something happens in me that takes a long yime to spell out—the long poem is often the consequence. Over the past decade or so, the sea, the island, the wind and all the rest gave me the five long poems that I p[re]sumptuously call the Island Cycle, though each of the five is distinct in manners and matters and all the tricky numerology of berse, and all the musics I try to grasp, like scared Mahler writing a symphony each summer in his mountain cabin. I'm not so sure the

mountains would put up with me the way the sea so kindly does. Mostly when I think of thee sea, I'm saying Thank you. I suppose you'd call me a pagan, but since I believe that everything is conscious, and consciousness pervades reality, I'd rather you think of me as a friend, the way I think of the sea. And the mountain too, thought he and I don't talk much these days—we do keep an eye on each other from across the river.

30 April 2020

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**They ask me deep questions,  
O dredge down and lift  
language up to them but they  
are gone before the answer comes.  
I'm not complaining. They've done  
their job. Their work is asking,  
not welcoming or rejecting answers.  
That's someone else's business—  
someone close as they can be.**

**30 April 2020**